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ABSTRACT

This article discusses language planning in Sweden. The Swedish Academy has as its goal to develop the purity, strength and nobility of the Swedish language by means of dictionaries, grammars, and the codification of vocabulary. Sweden also has a National Language Committee, one of a network of such committees existing in the Scandinavian countries. They are the result of the political, economic, cultural, and social connections between the Nordic countries, and they cooperate with each other in matters of language planning and cultivation. The principal field of activity is general usage, but the language of the sciences and of special professions is also handled. To this end, Sweden has the Center for Technical Terminology. The Swedish Language Committee has members representing five universities, the Swedish Academy and various royal academies, the public schools, the broadcasting companies and the press, writers, and theatres. The Committee follows the development of spoken and written Swedish, and carries out language planning and cultivation activities. Its main scientific interest is in the changes in modern Swedish. The publications of the Committee cover a wide field of linguistic and language planning topics, and include dictionaries, and a quarterly. Other private language associations described concern themselves with language cultivation. (CLK)

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Language Planning in Sweden

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By BERTIL MOLDE*

The Swedish Academy

In 1786 Gustavus III, king of Sweden, founded the Swedish Academy. According to its statutes the main purpose of the Academy should be "to develop the purity, strength, and nobility of the Swedish language." The Academy should fulfill this purpose by working and publishing a Swedish dictionary, a grammar, and "such treatises that can contribute to the consolidation and promotion of good taste." The Swedish Academy thus was the first language planning agency of Sweden. Its main linguistic work during its almost 200 years of existence has been connected with spelling and with the codification of vocabulary. Since 1892, the Academy has been publishing a comprehensive scientific dictionary of Swedish from the 1520 onwards, called the *Svenska Akademiens ordbok över svenska spraket (SAOB;* the Swedish Academy's dictionary of the Swedish language). This dictionary uses a scientific and historic approach. To date, it has reached the middle of the letter S (in 26 large volumes); it will be finished some time around the year 2000.

More important for Swedish usage and for the general public is the "word-list" of the Academy, *Svenska Akademiens ordlista över svenska spraket (SAOL),* first published in 1874; its tenth revised edition appeared in 1973. This word-list now contains about 150,000 Swedish words, giving their spelling, flexion, and to a certain extent pronunciation. Definitions are offered rather sparingly. The book is widely accepted as normative regarding spelling and flexion. Many users also believe that words not included in the book must not be used in good Swedish; this is certainly not the case. A word-list of some 150,000 words, published once every other decade, can of course not include all words in use, especially not terms from the more specialized vocabularies of the sciences and professions.

Since Swedish spelling was stabilized in the 1800's, there has been one real and official reform of Swedish spelling, in 1906. This rather important reform, however, was made by the government, not by the Academy, which, as a matter of fact, was very strongly opposed to certain parts of it. Since then it has been accepted that the Academy can make minor changes in spelling and flexion (in the word-list) without consulting anybody about it, but it cannot by itself undertake a real spelling reform. If a spelling reform should be made in Sweden, a special reform bill must be passed by the Swedish parliament.

Language Planning Agencies in Scandinavia

Swedish is closely related to Danish and Norwegian, and Swedish is the second official and national language of Finland (the other language, spoken by the great majority of Finns, is Finnish). Icelandic and Faroese, too, are related to the other Scandinavian languages, most closely to Norwegian. There are old and close political, economical, cultural, and social connections between the Nordic Countries, and the fairly good mutual understandability between Swedish, Danish and Norwegian (especially in writing) of course has been of the utmost importance for the relations between these countries. These relations nowadays have their special political platform in the Nordic Council, an institution for cooperation between the Nordic countries on a governmental and parliamentary level.

The question of cooperation between the Nordic countries was very much in focus during World War II, and Nordic linguists were strongly interested in strengthening the connections between the Nordic Languages, especially Swedish, Danish and Norwegian. In the beginning of the forties there were plans for establishing a common Nordic language committee. These plans, however, were abandoned at that time, but they have been taken up again lately. Instead, in 1944 a Swedish language committee was founded *(Nämnden för svensk språkvard* 'the Board of Cultivation of the Swedish Language'; in

(Continued on Page 3)

Professor Molde is Director of the Swedish Language Committee. He is, as well, a member of the Editorial Board of the Language Planning Newsletter.

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1974 the name was changed to *Svenska spraknämnden,* 'the Swedish Language Committee'). A special committee for the cultivation of the Swedish language in Finland was founded two years earlier, in 1942, and a Finnish language board was started in 1945.

Language committees were established in Norway in 1954 *(Norsk språknämnd,* 'Norwegian Language Committee', since 1971 *Norsk språkråd,* 'Norwegian Language Council'), in Denmark in 1955 *(Dansk Sprognævn,* 'Danish Language Committee), and in Iceland in 1964 *(Islenzk málnefnd,* 'Icelandic Language Committee). The language committees of Norway and Denmark were to a large extent organized on the pattern of the Swedish committee. Also worth mentioning is the special language committee for the Lappish population of Norway, Sweden and Finland which was established in 1971 *(Samisk språknämnd).*

The national language committees of the Nordic countries now are the official or (as in Sweden) semi-official language planning agencies of their countries, especially as regards general usage. But all of them are, in accordance with their statutes, obliged to cooperate with the other Nordic language committees. The purpose of this cooperation is to avoid new and unnecessary differences between the languages and if possible, to try to close the gaps between the languages.

The main field for the planning and cultivation activities of the different Nordic language committees is the general language, but of course the language and terminologies of different sciences and professions are taken into consideration too. There are, however, in most of the Nordic countries, special institutions dealing with the language(s) of technology. In Sweden, such an institution was founded as early as 1941. It is called *Tekniska Nomenklaturcentralen (TNC;* the Swedish Center for Technical Terminology).

Swedish Center of Technical Terminology

The present director of the TNC is Dr. Einar Selander (Box 43 041, 100 72 Stockholm 43). It is supported by the Swedish government and by a number of the most important private enterprises in Sweden as well as by several leading organizations and institutions. The Swedish Academy appoints a Swedish linguist as advisor to the TNC. It has a staff of six, three of them civil engineers or natural scientists, three of them have academic degrees in linguistics or social sciences. The TNC publishes Swedish and multilingual glossaries; among the more than 45 multilingual glossaries published by the TNC can be mentioned the Glossary of Brewing and Glossary of Environment (both of them Swedish-English-French-German), the Glossary of Astronautics (Swedish-English-French-German-Russian), and Glossary of Heat Treatment of Metals (Swedish-English-French-German-Russian-Japanese).

The national standardization organizations also deal with terms and try to standardize terminology and usage in different, mostly technical fields. These organizations cooperate with the national language committees, and the centers of technical terminology.

Private Language Associations

In most of the Nordic Countries there are different private organizations and societies interested in language cultivation, and to a certain extent language planning. Such a Swedish society is *Språkvårdssamfundet* (the Language Cultivation Society), in Uppsala. This society has a publication series called *Ord och stil* (Words and Style), now containing six volumes, including a book on Swedish pronunciation and its regulation, and a volume on methods and terms of language sociology.

The Swedish Language Committee

The Swedish Language Committee has about 30 members, representing the five universities of Sweden, the Swedish Academy and its dictionary, the Royal Academy of Sciences, the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, the Swedish schools, the Association of Teachers of Swedish, the Swedish Center of Technical Terminology, the Swedish Broadcasting Company, the Association of Swedish Writers, the Press Club, the Royal Dramatic Theatre, the Nordic Society, the Swedish Adult Education Association, the Folk University Society, The Swedish Marketing Association, and the Swedish Language Committee in Finland.

The language committee has an executive council of seven members. The chairman of the committee (and the executive council) is appointed by the government from among the members, and the government also appoints the head of the staff of the committee. The vital parts of the statutes of the committee have to be approved by the government. The committee now has a staff of five: four linguists and one clerk. The current director of the committee is Bertil Molde. The government pays the salaries of the four linguists. All other costs are payed by the committee itself, mainly through means obtained from the Swedish Academy (a yearly grant) and different foundations and from the selling of books published by the committee. The Swedish language committee then is a semi-official, state-subsidized organization, with a large amount of liberty of action within the framework of the statutes.

The statutes state that the committee shall "follow the development of spoken and written Swedish and carry on language planning and cultivation activities." And it is also stated that the committee has to try to bring about Nordic cooperation in the fields of language planning and cultivation in order to maintain and strengthen Nordic language unity.

The main scientific interest of the language committee is the changes of modern Swedish, especially in vocabulary, and different forms of official and professional language. The influx of new words into Swedish since World War II has been studied continuously, and a dictionary of new words in Swe-

dish is under preparation (parallel to similar Danish and Norwegian dictionaries). The internationally renown problem of difficult and complicated "officialese" is another main field of interest. In 1967 the language committee cooperated with the government in publishing a booklet on the language of laws and other official statutes. The purpose of this booklet was, and still is, to modernize the legal language and to make it easier to understand for the common man. Work along these lines will always be one of the main concerns of the language committee.

The Swedish Language Committee has a numbered publication series, now including 55 volumes. The best-seller among those volumes is *Skrivregler* ("Writing-Rules"), a manual on punctuation, use of capitals, syllabification, abbreviations, and so on. Although this book is only about 50 pages, more than 300,000 copies have been sold. The publication series covers a vast field of linguistics and language planning. Other books deal with themes like Swedish pronunciation, word-formation, different regional forms of Swedish, the language of the mass media, and so on. One of the most recent volumes (No. 51, 1974) is *Amerikasvenska* ("America-Swedish") by Professor Nils Hasselmo, University of Minnesota.

Apart from this series the language committee publishes dictionaries: a school dictionary of Swedish, a short etymological dictionary, a "style dictionary" (phrases and constructions), a Danish-Swedish dictionary. A Swedish pronouncing dictionary and a Norwegian-Swedish dictionary are in preparation.

Since 1965 the Swedish Language Committee has published a quarterly entitled: *Språkvård* ("Language Cultivation"). Similar periodicals are published by the language committees of Denmark and Norway.

Anyone can get advice and help in matters of Swedish usage from the Swedish Language Committee. This service is very much utilized, and more than 7,000 questions from the public are answered yearly, most of them by telephone. These questions range over the whole linguistic field and are asked by all kinds of institutions and people, from government departments and big industries to clerks and typists, from university professors to school children. Many questions regard terminologies outside the concern of the Swedish Center of Technical Terminology so the language committee has tried to become the central institution for all such non-technical terminologies. These plans are still being worked on; a small start has been made in the field of medical language.

The Swedish school system has its own representatives on the language committee. The language committee has no direct influence on the teaching of Swedish in the schools, or on the Swedish textbooks used in the schools. Its indirect influence, however, is rather strong—through the books and the quarterly published by the committee. Authors of textbooks in Swedish normally try to follow the recommendations of the committee. In high school (and of course university) textbooks, the problems of language cultivation are normally discussed and the language committee and its work is presented.

The Swedish Language Committee could be said to be an advisory board; nobody has to follow the advice or recommendations given by the committee. Freedom of speech includes a certain freedom of usage as well. But in spite of that, the Swedish public seems more and more inclined to consider the recommendations from the committee as natural guidelines towards good Swedish usage. When the committee is criticized, and that certainly happens, the critics tend to say that the committee and its linguistic staff are too lenient and liberal in their judgment of different kinds of usage. People dislike being told that in many cases there are two, or even more, quite correct possibilities of expressing oneself, not just the one they themselves use. This is a well-known phenomenon: the layman being far more strict, condemning, and prejudiced in his view on linguistic matters than the linguist or language planner. The Swedish Language Committee feels that it also has an obligation to work at propagating a certain amount of linguistic knowledge to the general public, thus creating wider understanding of linguistic problems and linguistic tolerance.

Further Nordic Cooperation

In April, 1975. Professor Molde attended a conference on problems connected with minority languages in the Nordic countries and 'neighbor language problems.' At this conference, the language and educational problems of the Finns in Sweden (and the Swedes in Finland); of the Lapps in Finland, Sweden and Norway; of the Eskimos in Greenland were discussed. The proceedings of this conference will be published later this year.

in a letter from Professor Molde to the Editor

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